

1. Medical SAS Outpatient Event FY2005 File Modified

The FY2005 Medical SAS Outpatient Event File (MDPPRD.MDP.SAS.SE05) has been modified to include new data fields and to remove filtering on CPT codes. The modified dataset now includes 20 CPT codes (CPT1 – CPT20) with repetition of a code allowed. Before FY2005, duplicate codes were filtered out and only unique codes were populated.

The new dataset now includes three unique modifiers for each CPT code (CPT1MODA, CPT1MODB, CPT1MODC, ..., CPT20MODA, CPT20MODB, CPT20MODC) that provide further detail on the nature of the procedure performed. A new format \$CPTMOD. was added to the format library FMTLIB6 that can be used to print the CPT modifier values.

Another numeric variable (NCPTTOT) was added to the new dataset that contains the total number of CPT codes transmitted from the VA Medical Center to the NPCD Oracle database. Note that this is not the same as the number of CPT codes populated in the modified dataset.

The National Data Systems will eventually repeat this process of updating the Event Datasets for fiscal years 2004, 2003, and perhaps 2002. The changes for these additional fiscal years will be applied to the “Revised” SAS files (e.g., MDPPRD.MDP.SAS.REVISED.SE04).

Online announcement of the file changes is available on the VA Intranet National Patient Care Database Audit Trail of Changes at <http://vaww.aac.va.gov/npcd/new/AuditTrailView.php>. The referenced technical report by the Health Economics Resource Center is available at http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov/tech_report_15.pdf.

2. Latest Official Counts of VA Facilities Available Online

The Planning Systems Support Group has issued the FY2005 1st Quarter Executive Report from the Veterans Affairs Site Tracking (VAST) system. The quarterly report constitutes a table of the current, approved number of VA Health Administration facilities by category (i.e., hospitals, nursing homes, vet centers, and outpatient clinics). It also includes a table showing the changes in number of facilities since 2000. The quarterly VAST Executive Reports are online at <http://vaww.pssg.med.va.gov/>.

3. Data Standardization Stakeholders Monthly Calls Started

March 15, 11:00 A.M. EST, at 1-800-767-1750, VANTS 98023, will be the second monthly teleconferences for Data Standardization (DS) stakeholders. These calls were begun in February to provide a forum for questions and discussion with the Office of Information leadership of DS and Health Data Repository (HDR) efforts to redesign the VHA's clinical data systems. The calls are open to all interested parties, including researchers. For further information about the monthly calls and about all other Data Standardization activities and issues, see the Intranet site at http://vaww.infoshare.va.gov/Data_Standardization/default.aspx.

4. HERC Offers Person-Level Cost Datasets

The Health Economics Resource Center has created patient-level datasets of the annual cost incurred by users of VA health care services during 1998-2002. Summary costs are provided for patients' inpatient, outpatient, and pharmacy utilization. For a detailed description of the datasets, see http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov/tech_report_16.pdf.

5. VistA Monograph 2005-2006 Available

The *VistA Monograph 2005-2006*, issued by the VHA Office of Information, provides an overview and features description of each of 91 VistA software packages. It also includes a description of the current VistA and evolving HealthVet-VistA systems and 13 "cross-cutting monographs, which address topics such as Duplicate Record Merge, Network Health Exchange, and Patient Data Exchange." The monograph can be downloaded as a Word or PDF file from http://www1.va.gov/vista_monograph/.

6. Registration Opens March 1 for Seattle ERIC Summer Session 2005

The 7th Annual Seattle Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Clinical Research Methods Summer Session will take place June 20-24, 2005, on the University of Washington campus. Registration for the session opened March 1. Among the numerous offerings will be VIREC's course, "Using VA Data for Research: Cancer as an Example." For a brochure, email the Seattle ERIC at eric@med.va.gov, and for full details and online registration, see http://www.eric.seattle.med.va.gov/education/summer_courses.html.

7. HSR&D Begins Cyber Seminars

The Health Services Research & Development Service (HSR&D) Center for Information Dissemination and Education Resources (CIDER) now offers cyber seminars on state-of-the-art training and special interest topics. The first seminar, on March 11, 2005, will be "Quasi-experimental Design For Studying quality Improvement Interventions: Strengths and Pitfalls" by Rodney Hayward, Ph.D. Other scheduled seminars will be offered by HERC, and VIREC will be presenting a series of seminars as well. For full information, see http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/.

8. Registration Open Now for VHA 2005 e Health University

Online registration is open for the Office of Information's VHA 2005 e Health University (VeHU), formerly known as Camp CPRS. VeHU will be held May 23-26, 2005, in Nashville, TN. As always, the sessions will feature hands-on classes, demonstrations, and exhibits of VHA clinical informatics, focusing on current innovations. VeHU is directed to the needs of clinicians. However, researchers considering developing informatics or customizing a commercial health information technology product for use in the VA will find VeHU an excellent opportunity to gain knowledge of the VHA clinical information system and to establish contacts with VHA software developers. For full information and online registration, see <http://vaww.vehu.vistau.med.va.gov/vehu2005/GeneralInfo/Default.cfm>.

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